

# IDEAS AT *Work*

## COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

### Portable Datavue pulls together best features

Until recently it was impossible to buy a portable computer for under \$4,000 that had two essential features: an easy-to-read screen, and complete PC-program compatibility.

Now you can. The \$2,495 Datavue 25 offers a "gaslight" amber and yellow screen that's more comfortable to read than most desk-top computer monitors, and it runs any IBM PC program right off the shelf.

After extensive testing, I found the machine to be far better than IBM's own portable, the PC Convertible, and better than any other portable that uses a liquid crystal display screen. The gaslight screen makes the difference, along with several other key features. In fact, it's so good that it can double as a desk-top computer with ease.

Here are some Datavue 25 features that I found impressive:

✓ **Good design.** The screen is large — 25 lines high and 80 characters wide — and it sits upright, closer to eye level instead of at table-top level. It's briefcase size — 13 inches wide, 11 inches high and about 7 inches deep — and has a handle on top. The keyboard works well, and a two-hour battery pack is available for truly portable operation. The entire package, which looks like a large lunch box when folded up, weighs only about 14 pounds.

✓ **Many choices.** A variety of configurations are available, making it easier to tailor to your specific needs. It comes with your choice of an internal 5.25-inch floppy drive, an internal 3.5-inch disk drive, or even a combination 3.5-inch drive along with a 20-mega-byte hard drive. Further, memory of 256K, 768K or 1250K is available. A minimum configuration for business purposes is 768K of memory

with one 5.25-inch floppy drive, which costs \$2,495. A big advantage of getting 768K of memory is that 360K can easily be set up to act as a second disk drive, sometimes called a RAM disk or electronic disk, thus providing two-drive operation that's even faster than a normal IBM PC with two drives. The RAM disk allocation software installs itself automatically when you turn on the computer.

✓ **Expansion capability.** Unlike other portable computers that are sometimes "software compatible" with IBM PCs, meaning that they run the same programs as PCs, the Da-

tavue claims to be "hardware compatible" as well. Through use of an external \$695 "expansion chassis," three full-size slots are available to plug in other IBM PC circuit boards. An internal modem is available for \$495.

I originally tested the Datavue 25 about a year ago when it was first released with only an LCD screen and 5.25-inch floppy disk. It worked well but was slow, and the screen was too hard to read. I didn't give it a very good review.

But this year's unit is obviously different and vastly improved. It operates faster. In fact, with the RAM disk it may be even faster than my desk-top hard-disk PC — and it's now available with the wonderful gaslight screen and 20-MB hard disk. The expansion chassis and modem, which I have not yet tested, add needed functionality too, rounding out the package.

It is still too expensive for the vast majority of executives. But for accountants or sales people that need to lug around a computer all the time, it's just perfect.

The Datavue 25 is available from some local dealers, or directly from the distributor, Datavue Corp. of Norcross, Georgia.



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